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The narrative of the two Lights in the tradition of the Ginans, prayers and religious ceremonies of the Satpanth Nizari Ismailis as an attempt to define the concept of the Divine through the Noor of Shah and Pir.

Nagib Tajdin

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Tawhid is a central concept in Ismailism. The sixth chapter of the daily Du'a recited three times a day starts with the words of Surah Ikhlas "*Kul hu Allah hu Ahad*" (say God is one!). It is further reinforced by the use of Surah Noor 24:35 (God is the Light of the heaven and the earth) regularly read and discussed during readouts, and waez in Jamatkhanas as well as recited in the presence of their Imam during ceremonies called Didar. The Shahada is recited half a dozen to one dozen times per day everyday in Jamatkhana, at every occasion, after each prayer, after each *tasbih*, at the end of the ceremonies as well as during each *mijlas*. The belief in monotheism is an unchallengeable part of everyday faith of each Ismailis Muslim.

Some of the very many ways Satpanth Ismailis relate to the Divine:

"*Divinity is a very difficult thing to define in verbal terminology*. [1]Aga Khan IV"

a. The most popular views among the community is the belief in one God, having attributes or at least acting through his attributes. The one often found in Waezes are that of the Jalali and Jamali attributes of Allah explaining the concept of Spiritual father and spiritual Mother. The "male" attributes such as al-Malik are the paternal aspect of God and the "feminine" attributes such as ar-Raheman is attributed to the spiritual mother. Both these aspects are of the same one God.

b. The second approach is Neoplanonic in nature. All of the names and attributes end in the First Intellect which is the Aql'I'Qul and recipient of the name Allah and of all his attributes. The Aql'I'Qul is "instaured "as would explain Professor Henri Corbin, it is not "emanated" like the Universal Soul therefore it is not possible to look beyond it. By "instaured" we mean appearing without an Origin. Emanated refer to something that comes out of an already existing being. Thus the First Intellect is "Instaured" and the Universal Soul (Second Intellect) is "emanated" from the Aql'I'Qul. This is more an approach popular among Ismailis of the Fatimid era however, even today, the Imam of the Ismailis use the same language and refer to Aql'I'Qul as guiding the human intellect though transcending it. "The divine intellect, "Aql Qul", both transcends and informs the human intellect." says the Aga Khan[2]. In his Farmans, the present Imam, as Imams of the past, is referring to his followers as spiritual children and gives them paternal and maternal blessings in verbal Farmans and in his Talikas (written Farmans)

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c. The Imam as the Mazhar (Epiphany) of Allah. This notion is found in the minutes of the 1975 Ismailia Association Conference in Paris[3] by the leadership of the community. The word Mazhar has been interpreted differently in the community and the present Imam has insisted that" you cannot articulate the Tariqah without articulating the concept of Imamat[4]". The same report emphasise the absolute transcendence of God. The double negative is used for the transcendental God and one should remember that a double negative does not make a positive here. Therefore for example when one says God cannot be Merciful AND God cannot not be Merciful; we recognise that we are trying to comprehend that which is beyond the attributes of Merciful.

d. The Concept of *Panj Tan Pak*: The Light of Hazrat Ali, Prophet Muhammad, Bibi Fatima, Hazrat Hassan and Hazrat Hussein is called *Panj Tan Pak*, the five holy bodies. Moman Chitvani, a well known *Granth* of Pir Sadardin describe well the concept. While the verse is full of symbolism, it does shows that God is the sum of the Panj Tan Pak, again bringing the concept of monotheism. It says that Prophet Muhammad is the head and Bibi Fatima is the heart, Hassan and Hussein are the two eyes who bring comfort to the heart and Mowla Ali is not defined by any anthropomorphic attributes, it just says that Mowla Ali is the same Ali Avatar.[5] The concept is part of the 6th Chapter of the daily prayers of all Ismailis. It follows the recitation of the Sura al-Ikhlas and precedes the recitation of the genealogy of Imams. This concept is closer to that of the two Lights, the Concept of Shah and Pir.

e. Shah Pir, the Light of Imamat and the Light of Piratan. These are not different beliefs but these are various ways to understand the Divine. Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah (a.s) said: "I am the Light of both Hazrat 'Ali and Prophet (Muhammad). Though young in age I am exalted." (1 Sep 1885, Bombay) – Imam Ali and Imam Hussein being both part of the Noor e Imamah and Prophet Muhammad and Hazrat Hassan are both part of the Noor-e-Piratan as both are in the lineage of Pir in the Asal Du'a. As for Bibi Fatima, she is called Fatima Fatir (Creator), she is *de facto* part of the Light at the creation of the universe and she is the one who first instituted the foundation of Gat Pat in the Spiritual World (the Ginan "*Ved Vatchan Gur Tanra*" of Pir Shams[6].) - This concept of the two Lights, the Concept of Shah and Pir is very close therefore to the Concept of Panj Tan Pak..

It is in this perspective that the next chapter is being defined below:

Enlightenment comes from the Two Lights.

Anant Akhado, a well known work of Pir Hassan Kabirdin gives the following verses 348[7]:

> **Verse:** Aashaajee Gur-Gat-Gangaa maanhe ame-j betthaa
> partak Gur-Nar avtaar jee
>
> **Translation:** Oh Lord We are entirely present in the Gur-Gat-Gangaa (Jamatkhana)
> and we are the ever present Manifestation of the Lord in the form of Gur-Nar(Shah-Pir)

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Shah (Lord) is a title given to the Imam. According to the Declaration of Alamut the Imam's Noor is above all existential attributes. His Noor can be equated to He who is above all Else. The same can be found in various ginans. Khat Nirinjan specifically points to this concept of God beyond Attributes[8]. The Gur-Pir (Gur) is the title given to the Light of the Creator. Pir is referred to in the context of Satadhari Pir (Pir in Authotity or Authentic Pirs). The Asal Dua was giving the lineage of the Imam and the lineage of the Pir as both are inseparable. The Light of the Pir is called Gur Bhrahma in the *Ginans and Granths a*nd is equated to the Creator, to the Epiphany of the attributes of Allah, such as Khaliq. The name Pir should not be confused with the many saints called "Pir" as a sign of respect. The status of *Satadhari* Pir is more of a Divine Status with the power to bring the universe into existence and make the creation disappear. Ginans do not used *Pir* in the way one would address a sage or saints. The Light of the Satadhari Pir is the Aql'I'Qul.

The Gur of various Cycles known as Yugs are known as follow:

- Karta Yug: Gur Brahma
- Treta Yug: Gur Veejeshthann
- Duapur Yug: Gur Veedur-vyaas
- Kal Yug: Gur Nabi Muhammad

In Anant Akhado verses 374-376, Pir Hassan Kabirdin writes that all 4 names given above were his own name and that he was known by these names. During this present Cycle from the time of Hazrat Ali as Imam, Prophet Muhammad is the Gur Pir and bearear of the Noor–e-Piratan. . His successor is Hazrat Hassan and Shah Karim is also the Bearer of the same Noor. The present Imam is the 51st Pir since the beginning of this Cycle. Sometimes the Imam does not appoint any Pir and combine the Light of Piratan with the Light of Imamat. In reality there is no appointment in the material way. The Imam point out in whom he will next manifest. In the Will of Aga Khan III it is clearly mentioned that the present Imam and Pir is Shah Karim. There has been a women Pir (the mother of the first Aga Khan, Pir Bibi Sarkar) and there has been a book as Pir, a book of Farman obviously as the Noor-e-Piratan is installed by the Noor-e-Imamah. This lineage can be found in the Asal Dua.

And in the last verse of the Ginan "Ramta Ramta Prabhu"[9], Pir Hassan Kabirdin says:

> **Verse 61**: "*Eji E Dhol boliyaa Pir Hassan Kabirdin*
> *shresti naa sirjannhaar re*"
>
> **Translation**: Pir Hassan Kabirdin, the Creator of the World, spoke these words.

In the Ginan Anand Anand Kariyo Rikhisaro of Pir Sadardin, the last verse is:

> **Verse:** *Eji Bhanne Pir Sadardin Satgur Bhirmaa*;"
>
> **Translation:** So said Pir Sadardin, the True Lord Bhirma.[10]
> In his work titled Sloko Nano, Pir Sadardin says in the 10th verse:
>
> **Verses:** satgur kahere nure meendar samaareeyaa
> ane nure rachyo aasmaan

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te nur maanhethee nur pragatteeyaa
tenu satgur chhe naam re.....10

Translation: The True Guide says: The Creation originated from the Light, and the heavens were created from the Light. From the (primordial) Light, Light manifested. It's name is the True Guide (Pir).

The above verse suggests that there are two levels of light. The first level is that of Niraakaar Nirinjan - the formless and unknowable. Then there is the second level which is the Universal Intellect through which the guidance is given and is manifested in the Pir.[11]

In his Ginan: *NarNaklank keri vaat*,[12] Syed Fatehali Shah states

Verses: ejee satgur sat karee jaann mahamad rupejee
aad niri(n)jan saam sadaay alee rupejee.....2

Translation: Know with conviction that the True Guide is in the form of Prophet Muhammed. The Ever-living Lord who is not descriptible nor knowable from the beginning, is indeed in the form of Ali.

Syed Imamshah says in the second verse of his Ginan "*Jaagat kiyunnaahin re bhalaa*"

Verse: Hassan Hussen do noor pechhaano, unse umat saari re

Translation: Recognise both Noor of Hazart Hasan and of Imam Husein through whom the whole creation came into existence.

These are but few example of the concept of the two Noor found in various Ginans written by different Pirs and Seyyeds. In the ceremony called *Chanta* which consist in seeking forgiveness usually once a month, the person while receiving the sprinkles of water, is told "*Shah Pir Bakshe*" (May Shah Pir forgive you) – The "Sat Shabd", Highest Word used in the Ibadah (Meditation or Bandagi as it is sometimes called) is according in the Ginans "Pir Shah"[13]. The second verse in the *Granth* Bhram Prakash[14] of Pir Shams says:

Verse: Sat shabda kaa karo veechaaraa, Pirshaah kahojee vaara(m)-vaaraa

Translation: Reflect (meditate) upon the True Word and say 'Pir Shah' (name of the Lord) again and again the words 'Pir and Shah'

There is a question as to whether we are talking of a Dual Light or of the Duality of the same Light. In this regards, the Granth Aradh[15] says that The Noor of Piratan appeared from the Noor of Imamat countless cycles ago. This is where Vishnu established Buddh (the Intellect). Lets point out that all these concepts are spiritual concepts and it is in a way futile to try to reconcile various vocabularies. For instance one can equate Nur-e-Imamah to Imam Mustakar and Pir and Noor-e-Piratan to Imam Mustawda or to Hujjat ul Imam. All this is a matter of semantics.

This concept of the Duality of Light or of the Dual Light is not restricted to Ismailis in the subcontinent, it would be appropriate to quote a non-Ismaili source on this concept. The Surat al Nurayan in the copy of the Quran found in Bhankipore gives also similar concept. It says "*O*

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you who believe, believe in the two lights[16]*."* Ismailis do not know about this version of the Quran nor these Surahs. The interpretation of the Quran is in any case left to their Imam. The matter of the authenticity is not the subject of discussion here. But the similarity of the concept exists and it is important to mention it. Tisdall[17] and Eliash have mentioned the controversy and the text of the two missing Surahs, one of the "Two Lights" (Surah al-Nurayan) containing 41 verses and the other named "Al Walayah" containing 7 verses.[18] - The same concept of two Lights can also be found among the Christian Gnostic.[19] –

Comparative Table for Light of Shah Pir

Shah	Pir
Noor-e-Imamat	Noor-e-Piratan
Vishnu (Nirinjan Nirakar)	Brahma
Hazrat Ali	Prophet Muhammad
Imam Mustakar	Imam Mustawda
Imam Hussein	Hazrat Hassan
Khat Nirinjan	Bibi Fatima Fatir
Beyond Existential Attribu	All Attributes
Beyond all else	Aql'I'Qul

As Curto describe so well, "Between the 'twin pillars' of the apophatic and kataphatic discourse of the Ginān stands the person of the Imām giving a living, personal ta'wīl to the Inconceivable Formless One" [20]

One can thus say that Ismailis from the Satpanth tradition as the Ismailis of other traditions have found an intelligent way to define God without falling into the trap of Anthropomorphism or the trap of Agnosticism. They have done it through the Concept of a Light which is beyond Existential Attributes and impossible to define and its other more visible side, a Light which is the recipient of all the Attributes and of the Names of God. The Concept of Shah Pir is still prevalent in the Community.

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Annexe 1: All Pirs have the the same Light of Gur Bhirma the Creator.

An interesting Ginan of Syed Imamshah is found in a Khojki litho published by Aladin Ghulam Hussein before 1881 found in the Heritage Society Special Collection[21] under number hs0033c. The ginan, probably found among Imamshahis Satpanthi gives the name of the bearers of the Noor–e-Piratan, the Light of Gur Bharma as follow. We have reproduced few passages from the relevant page below.

Aad Dhandhukar Sahebe Sirajiya Murat Char. Sahebe lahi betha Hari Avatar.
Satgur Brahma Pir Shams Avatar, Satgur Brahma Pir Nassirdin Avatar,
Satgur Brahma Pir Sahebdin Avatar, Satgur Brahma Pir Sadardin Avatar....

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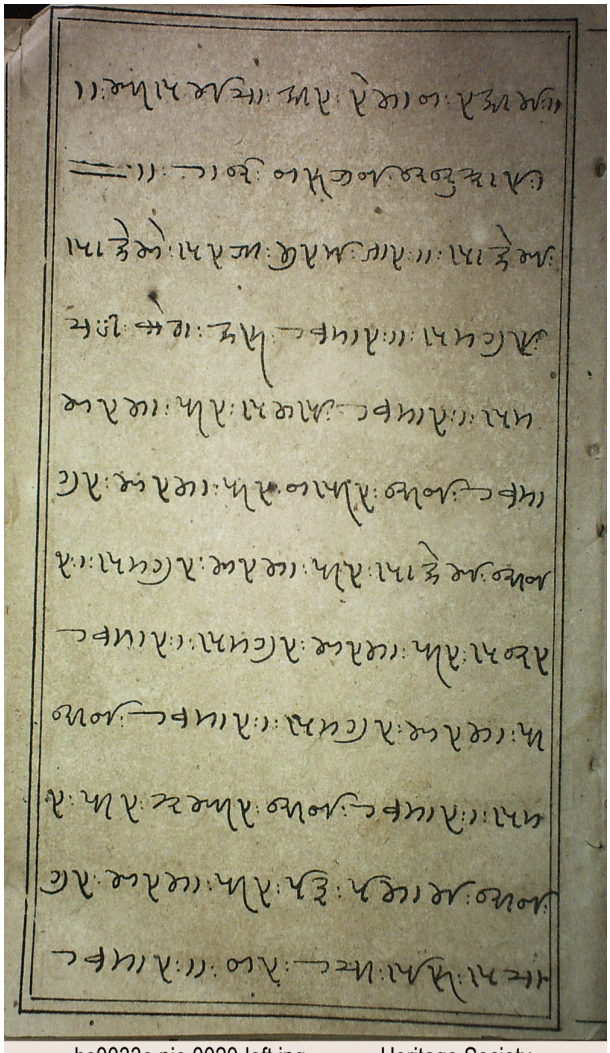

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[21] The Heritage Society Special Collection has been made available online since July 2022 under https://library.ismaili.net and contains manuscripts, lithos and books related to Ismailism in various scripts and languages.

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